

# Communications Task Force

Brief to Mayor and Council

June 21, 2010

# Agenda/Outline

- Opening Remarks
  - CTF Mission Statement
  - Members of the CTF
- Findings
  - Citizen Outreach
  - Communication Mechanisms
  - Development Process
- Recommendations and Next Steps

# CTF Mission Statement

- To encourage and improve dialogue between Citizens and City Hall with an emphasis on listening and incorporating Citizens' views
- To recommend ways to use communication vehicles - new and old, more effectively
- To improve the transparency of decisions affecting our City
- To make information easy to access and understand

# Members of the CTF

**Chair – Bridget  
Newton**

## Professional Backgrounds of the CTF

Noreen Bryan

Sean Carr

Sam Elowitch

Jacques Gelin

Elyse Gussov

Shashi Koduro

Alice Liu

Stephen Maroon

Carol Nicholas

Waleed Ovase

Russ Rubin

Chris Noonan Sturm

Senior Management - Dept of the Navy

Journalism, Public Affairs, and Government

Editor and Web Developer

Lawyer, Env & Nat. Resources, Dept of Justice

Contracting Officer, US Holocaust Memorial Museum

Project Manager and Small Business Owner

Technology, Business, & International Development

Director of Marketing

Correspondence Management

Community Activist

Media and Marketing Strategist

Non-profit and Government Web Communications

# Communications Task Force Findings

## Citizen Outreach

Jack Gelin, Shashi Koduru, Alice Liu,  
Carol Nicholas, Chris Noonan Sturm

# Citizen Outreach Agenda/Outline

- Mission Statement
  - To hear from a wider group of citizens about their communication experiences with the City, their needs and recommendations for improvement
- Methodology
- Interview Findings
- Recommendations



# Methodology

- Established information interview approach
- Identified key groups and people to interview
- Developed a questionnaire
- Sent invitations and conducted interviews
- Compiled notes and reviewed with task force

# Citizens/Areas/Groups We Interviewed

- Twinbrook, Lincoln Park, Regents Square, Plymouth Woods, Americana Center, Rockshire (former HOA director)
- Asian Pacific American Task Force
- Small business owners
- Current and former members of Mayor and Council
- Other City Government (Communications staff, City Manager, Recreation and Parks, Neighborhood Resources Coordinator, Senior Citizens Commission, Rockville Bike Advisory Commission)



# Snapshot of General Citizen Comments

- Many things are working well:
  - There are many ways to communicate with the City
  - “Imagine Rockville” led to TCAT, Bike Advisory Committee, Science Center Task Force
  - Suggestions are already being implemented
- Issues that Citizens raised:
  - Some feel there is more one-way than two-way communication between Citizens and the City
  - The City needs to more proactively communicate with Citizens
  - City needs to advocate Citizen concerns to County and Developers

# Citizen Comments on the Budget

- Need more explanation, information, transparency
  - On budget process, planning, and components
  - Clearly define what is a fee or tax and where the money goes
- Articulate the value of projects:
  - Publicize the Public cost/benefit analysis
  - Explain the needs that are driving a project
  - Explain the fit with the city's strategic plan
- Information needs to be more accessible and available

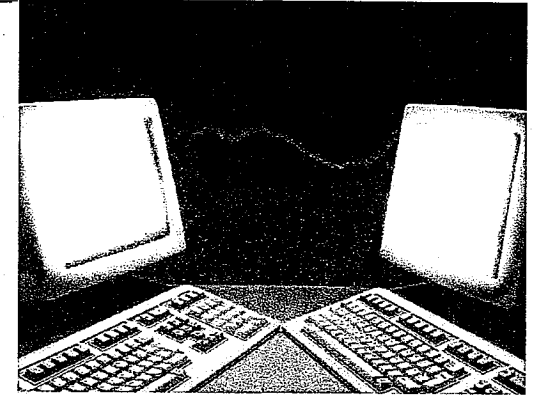
# Range of Views from Mayor and Council and City Staff

- Citizens are concerned most about Local Neighborhood issues
- What are the Challenges?
  - How do we communicate complex issues?
  - Are we hearing from a diverse group of Citizens?
- Budget is too broadly categorized, need project descriptions and cost explanation

# City is Reaching Citizens but Resources Can Be Used More Effectively

Interaction	Citizen Comments
Neighborhood Resource Coordinators (NRCs)	NRC's used to be first point of contact and citizen advocate; now they don't have all of the information, no clear focus. Short-staffed but one is meeting with small businesses which is good.
Citizen Request System	Not transparent or fully harnessed (e.g. use to get metrics for performance, customer satisfaction)
Mayor and Council Meetings	Good idea to conduct them in different community venues; drop-ins should be in the community
Town Hall	Should involve all of Mayor and Council and held quarterly

# Good Methods with Varying Popularity and Utility



Interaction	Citizen Comments
Email, phone	Email is most commonly used by citizens, phone also popular
Website	Very popular; Needs revamp, needs to be designed for diverse audiences, need to harness current technologies
Rockville Channel 11	Good job covering public meetings; Video on Demand is a great feature, but City can leverage this resource even more
Rockville Reports	Some love it, some view as propaganda; Info is light but should refer reader to web link with more detail
News Releases	Need differentiation (e.g. “administrative” versus “real news” releases);



# Communications Task Force Findings

## Mechanisms

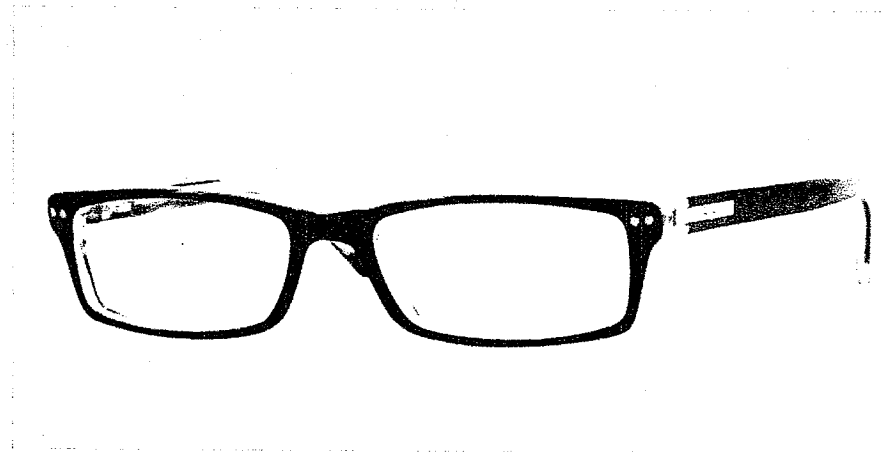
Sean Carr, Sam Elowitch, Steve Maroon,  
Waleed Ovase, Russ Rubin



# Kudos to Communications Staff

- The award-winning team is doing a fine job
- In communications, Rockville is doing many things right – here's how we can do better

# Strategy #1



**Approach Communications Through the  
Eyes of the Citizens**

# Rockville Channel 11



- Solicit and incorporate viewer feedback
  - Program ideas
  - Comments
- Maximize relationships with cable providers
  - Digital program guide, schedule
  - Citizen-volunteer training

# Rockville Channel 11



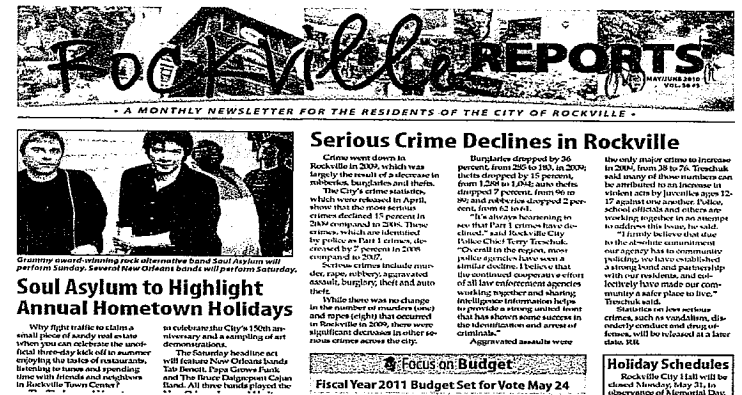
- More dynamic programming and variety
  - Spotlight on current events (e.g. snowstorm)
  - Feature Mayor and Council "chats"
- Utilize on-screen (TV and web) messaging
  - Upcoming programs
  - City events

Rockville 11  
Program Schedule  
June 2010

	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	
12 MID	Planning Commission	Historic District Commission	Mayor & Council	Mayor & Council	Historic District Commission	Mayor & Council	Planning Commission	12 MID
6 a.m.	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	6 a.m.
8:30 a.m.	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	8:30 a.m.
7 a.m.	Public Safety Awards (starting 6/18)	State of the City (starting 6/17)	Public Safety Awards (starting 6/18)	State of the City (starting 6/17)	Public Safety Awards (starting 6/18)	State of the City (starting 6/17)	State of the City (starting 6/17)	7 a.m.
7:30 a.m.	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	7:30 a.m.
8 a.m.	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	8 a.m.
8:30 a.m.	State of the City (starting 6/17)	Public Safety Awards (starting 6/18)	Hometown Holidays 2010 Block	Public Safety Awards (starting 6/18)	Hometown Holidays 2010 Block	State of the City (starting 6/17)	Hometown Holidays 2010 Block	8:30 a.m.
9 a.m.	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	9 a.m.
9:30 a.m.	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	9:30 a.m.
10 a.m.	State of the City (starting 6/17)	Public Safety Awards (starting 6/18)	Hometown Holidays 2010 Block	Public Safety Awards (starting 6/18)	Hometown Holidays 2010 Block	State of the City (starting 6/17)	Hometown Holidays 2010 Block	10 a.m.
10:30 a.m.	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	10:30 a.m.
11 a.m.	City Behind the Scenes	State of the City (starting 6/17)	State of the City (starting 6/17)	State of the City (starting 6/17)	State of the City (starting 6/17)	A Pair of Jacks	A Pair of Jacks	11 a.m.
11:30 a.m.	A Pair of Jacks	State of the City (starting 6/17)	State of the City (starting 6/17)	State of the City (starting 6/17)	State of the City (starting 6/17)	MCTV	MCTV	11:30 a.m.
12 p.m.	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	12 p.m.
12:30 p.m.	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	12:30 p.m.
1 p.m.	Mayor & Council	Planning Commission	Mayor & Council	Historic District	Planning Commission	Mayor & Council	Planning Commission	1 p.m.
4 p.m.	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	4 p.m.
4:30 p.m.	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	County Report This Week	4:30 p.m.
5 p.m.	State of the City (starting 6/17)	Flag Day Ceremony	State of the City (starting 6/17)	Flag Day Ceremony	State of the City (starting 6/17)	Flag Day Ceremony	State of the City (starting 6/17)	5 p.m.
5:30 p.m.	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	5:30 p.m.
6 p.m.	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	Rockville's 11 News	6 p.m.

# Rockville Reports

- Solicit and incorporate citizen content
  - Comments, calendar of events
- Bridge print to online media
  - Link content to website, Channel 11, social media
  - Customize content to each media
- Cost savings
  - Consider changing production schedule to bi-monthly (6x per year), saving \$36,000



**Rockville REPORTS**  
A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE RESIDENTS OF THE CITY OF ROCKVILLE

**Serious Crime Declines in Rockville**  
Crime went down in Rockville in 2009, which was largely the result of a decrease in robberies, burglaries and thefts. The City's crime statistics, which were released in April, show that the most serious crimes declined 13 percent in 2009 compared to 2008. There were 1,299 serious crimes, which are identified by police as Part 1 crimes, decreased by 7 percent in 2009 compared to 2008. Serious crimes include murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, theft and auto theft. While there was no change in the number of murders (one) and rape (eight) that occurred in Rockville in 2009, there were significant decreases in other serious crimes across the city. Burglaries dropped by 36 percent, from 289 to 185, in 2009, from 1,299 to 1,042 auto thefts dropped 7 percent, from 910 to 846 and robbery decreased 2 percent, from 12 to 11. "It's always heartening to see that Part 1 crimes have declined," said Rockville City Police Chief Terry Trischak. "Overall in the region, most police agencies have seen a similar decline. I believe that the continued cooperative effort of all law enforcement agencies working together and sharing intelligence information helps to provide a strong united front that has shown some success in the identification and arrest of criminals." Aggravated assault went down 10 percent, from 38 to 34. Trischak said many of these incidents can be attributed to an increase in violent acts by juveniles ages 12-17 against one another. Police, school officials and others are working together to no longer address this issue, he said. "I firmly believe that due to the all-white commitment our agency has in community policing, we have established a strong bond and partnership with our residents, and collectively have made our community a safer place to live," Trischak said. Statistics on less serious crimes, such as vandalism, disorderly conduct and drug possession, will be released at a later date. R4.

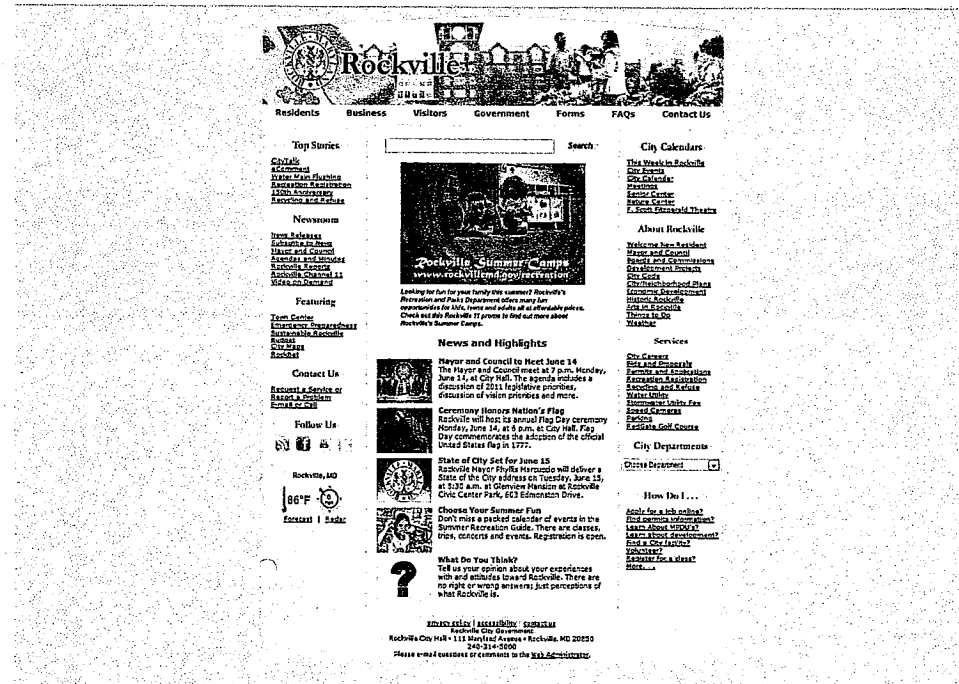
**Soul Asylum to Highlight Annual Hometown Holidays**  
Grassroots award-winning rock alternative band Soul Asylum will perform Sunday, several New Orleans bands will perform Saturday. Why fight traffic to listen a small piece of sandy real estate when you can celebrate the unofficial three-day kick off to summer enjoying the likes of restaurants, listening to music and spending time with friends and neighbors in Rockville Town Center? The formerly headline act will feature New Orleans bands La Brea, Papa Corvo Funk and The House Department Cajon Band. All three bands played the 11th annual Hometown Holidays celebration on Saturday, May 23, in observance of Memorial Day.

**Focus on Budget**  
Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Set for Vote May 24

**Holiday Schedules**  
Rockville City Hall will be closed Monday, May 31, in observance of Memorial Day.

# RockvilleMD.gov Website

- Simplify navigation and design
  - Ease use and search for information for different audiences
    - Residents
    - Business
    - Visitors
- Feature popular links



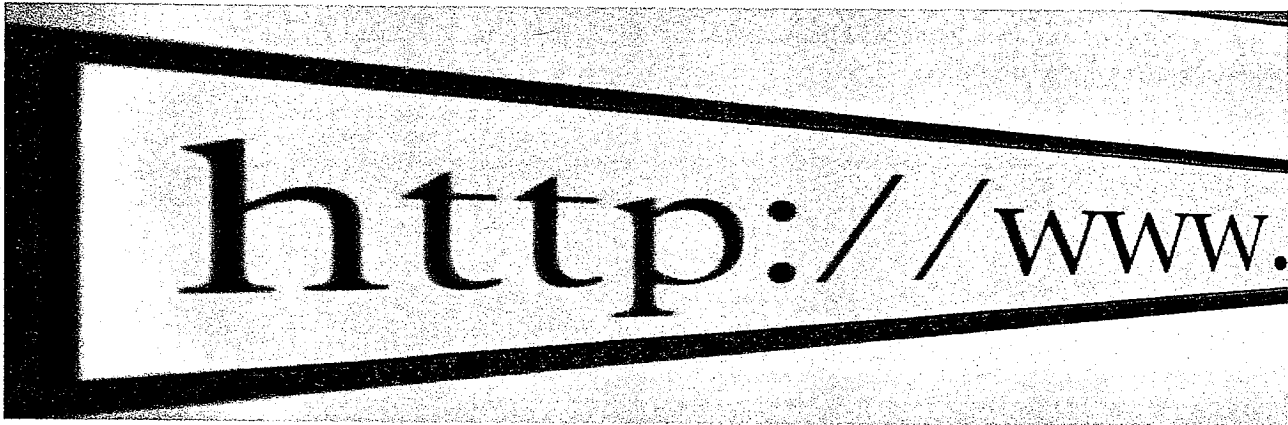


# RockvilleMD.gov Website (continued)

- Cross-promote communications mechanisms
  - One-stop subscriptions page, including newsletters and social media
  - Convenient links to other official city websites
- Allow visitors to provide feedback on every page
  - Facebook “like” button (for example)
  - Flag low-performing pages for review to fix, eliminate, or combine with other page
- Market the city
  - Beautiful photos of the Rockville community
  - Highlight neighborhoods
  - More event details



# Strategy #2



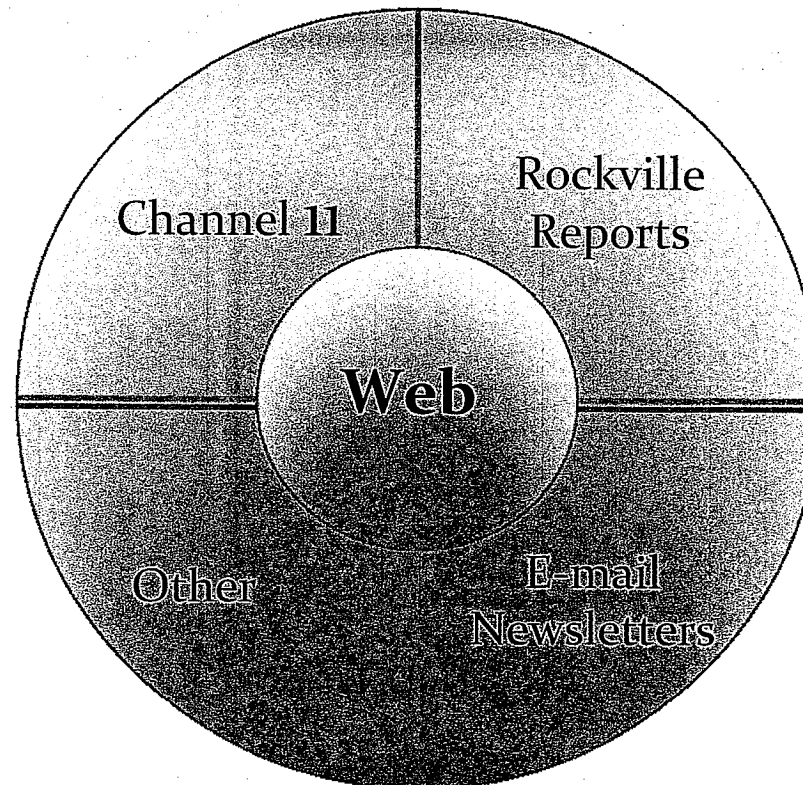
http://www.

**Use the RockvilleMD.gov website as the  
HUB of city communications**

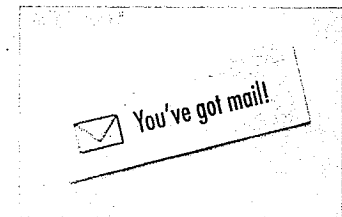
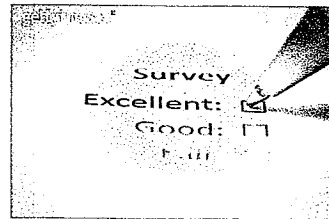
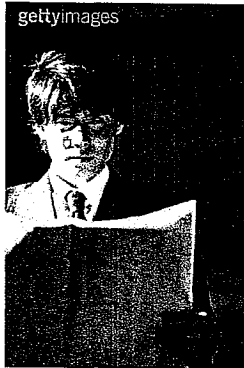
# Web Site = City Information Hub

93% of Rockville households are online

Source: City Manager's Report/Communications Staff



# Strategy #3



**Continuously take the pulse of citizens to provide timely information and action!**



# How can the city know what matters most to its citizens?

Analyze **FREE RESEARCH** from the following sources:

- Most popular web pages
- Attendance at local events
- Trouble-ticket system (CRS)
- Phone calls and e-mails to city staff, mayor, and council
- Citizens' forums
- Surveys
- Business, real estate, transportation activity
- Local press coverage

# Use this information to continually refine and improve city communications:

- Publish a monthly top 10 list of categorized tickets, so that city staff and citizens know what are the top concerns at any time
- Get immediate city council action
- Improve city operations
- Prioritize budget items
- Fund activities and events that citizens most enjoy
- Publicize resolution of trouble tickets, especially common concerns. *Show everyone WHEN and HOW the city is responsive.*



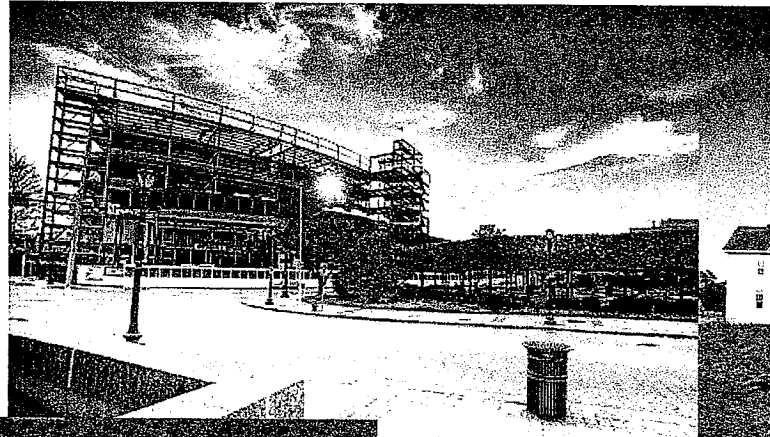
# Immediate Recommendations

- **Use feedback from citizens to fine-tune Channel 11, *Rockville Reports*, and the website**
- **Bring the city to life through an expertly designed website that is easy to read and navigate**
- **Drive all traffic to that website for more information on items included in various city communications (TV, e-mail, *Rockville Reports*, social media, etc.)**
- **Continue to monitor and seek citizen feedback to help improve this great city and its operations**
- **These recommendations can be adopted at minimal cost through a reallocation of existing communications resources.**

# Communications Task Force Findings

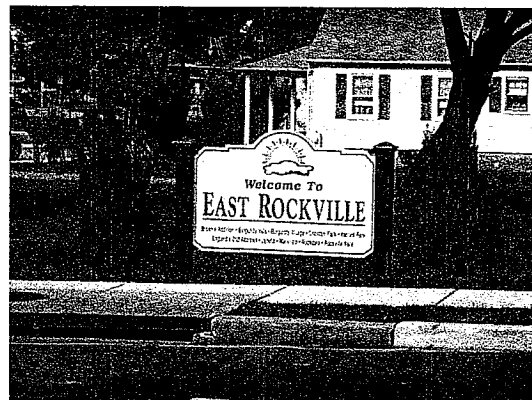
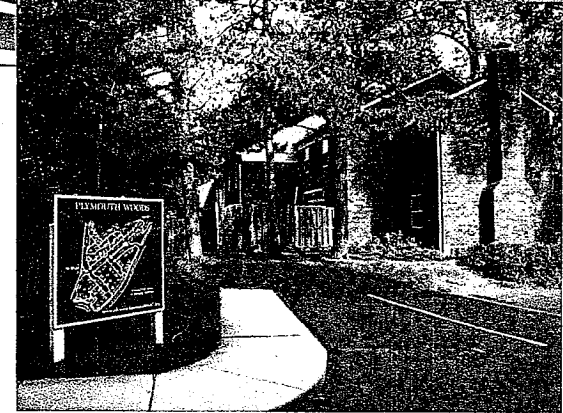
## Subcommittee on Development

Noreen Bryan, Elyse Gussow



# Purpose

To discover ways that the city of Rockville can better communicate with its citizens about development in our community



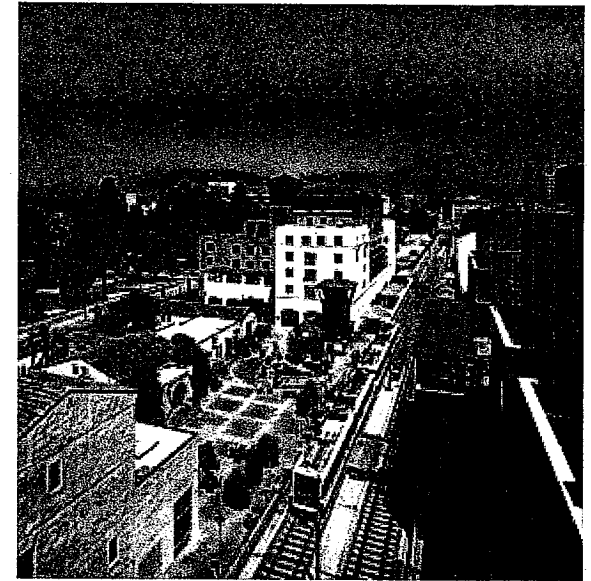


# Rockville is Changing

Rockville is changing from greenfield development to infill development.

How can Rockville preserve its neighborhoods and still have development take place?

Citizen input is more important now than ever before.



# Methodology

- Met with Planning Staff; attended Planning Academy
- Interviewed Communities Affected by Development
  - Legacy of Lincoln Park
  - Brightview of Rockville
  - C.C.B. School of Rockville
  - Bealls Grant II
  - Victory Housing
  - Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan
  - Princeton Place Fence
- Guided by Communications-related Questions from Chair of Planning Commission and Councilman Pierzchala



# What Citizens Said

“The role of city planners seems to be limited to just enforcing city land use codes, leaving residents to discern their real impact on existing neighborhoods.....

**From a citizen who welcomed the infill development:**

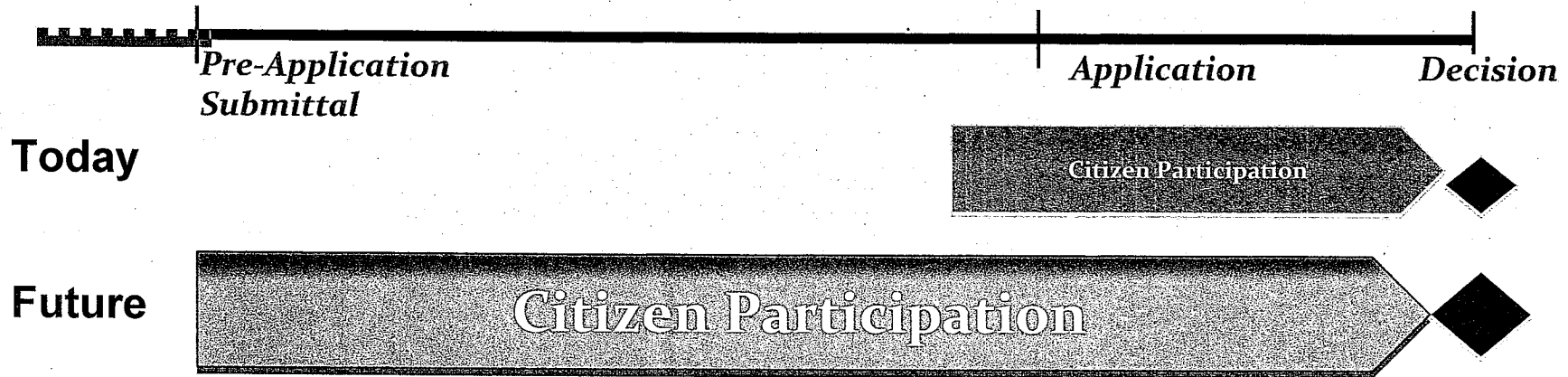
“Neighborhoods are largely left to negotiate complicated infill development projects seemingly without the support of city planners.”

# What Citizens Also Said

- “There is no system to correct mistakes.”
- “Our input and concerns are discounted.”
- “Meeting notification is in jargon.”

# Recommendation: Involve Citizens from the Beginning

## Timeline of Development Review Process



- Notify Citizens as soon as Pre-Application is Received
- Open the Development Review Committee Meetings to Citizens
- Offer Online Training for Citizens with Interactive Follow-up
- Encourage Community Benefits Agreements

## Recommendation: Give Citizens Parity – Need Critical Changes

- Involve citizens as stakeholders
- Make the process Citizen Friendly
  - Allow engagement without a lawyer/experts
- Make In-fill Development Work for the Community
- Create a system for dispute resolution before resorting to the courts, for example:

Inspector General/ Ombudsman

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

## Recommendation:

# Make Citizens Stakeholders in Staff Analysis and Public Hearings

- Include Citizen Testimony in Staff Analysis OR  
Create an Independent Hearing Examiner
- Boards and Commissions Should Address All Citizen  
Findings
  - Resolve Conflicting Testimony
- Allow Citizens Sufficient Time to Present Complex  
Testimony
  - End three (3) minute constraint
- Revise Guidelines for Area Meetings
  - Impartial Moderator and Recorder of Minutes



# Broad Recommendations

- **Officially embrace and adopt open government principles** – transparency, accountability, measurability – especially on Budget and Development issues
- **Develop an Integrated Communications Strategy** with input from Mayor and Council
- **Commit to informing and engaging citizens in the Development process**
- **Recommend a Worksession** With Mayor and Council, Boards and Commissions
- **Make the Web site a priority for improvement**

Thank You!